

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 161

By McNally

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of John Louis Ryder of Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of John Louis Ryder; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ryder was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, an esteemed attorney and prominent leader in Republican Party politics, John Ryder was born in Chicago, Illinois, on May 31, 1949; and

WHEREAS, after his family's move to Memphis in 1963, Mr. Ryder became infatuated with the South, the State of Tennessee, and the Mississippi River, with Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign inspiring his interest in politics; and

WHEREAS, a graduate of White Station High School, Wabash College, and Vanderbilt University Law School, John Ryder entered private practice in 1974 as an attorney with the law firm of Canada, Russell, and Turner in Memphis; and

WHEREAS, in the early years of his law practice, Mr. Ryder worked part time in the Shelby County Attorney's Office and helped draft the Home Rule Charter for Shelby County; as he continued honing his knowledge of Shelby County law, he developed an expertise in bankruptcy law and commercial litigation and later in election law; and

WHEREAS, John Ryder became an active member of the Young Republicans in 1975 and soon dove into the nitty gritty of political campaigning: knocking on doors, registering voters, putting out campaign letters, and making speeches; he especially loved attending large political events, where he could enthusiastically meet and engage with others who shared his political passions; and

WHEREAS, with his enthusiasm for politics and boundless energy, Mr. Ryder skillfully managed campaigns for state legislators Brad Martin and Karen Williams and worked in campaigns for such Tennessee Republican luminaries as Winfield Dunn, Lamar Alexander, Don Sundquist, and Fred Thompson, and he was instrumental in the election of Jim Rout as Shelby County Mayor in 1994; and

WHEREAS, an acknowledged leader in the Republican Party, John Ryder was elected to serve as chairman of the Shelby County Republican Party in 1987 and rose to become an active member of the party's statewide executive committee and as one of Tennessee's representatives on the Republican National Committee; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ryder also served as general counsel for the Republican National Committee from 2013 to 2017 under Reince Priebus, and he was either a delegate or active participant at every Republican National Convention between 1984 and 2016; and

WHEREAS, in both 1988 and 2004, he cast votes for president and vice president as a Tennessee Presidential Elector in the Electoral College; from humble local political gatherings in a living room or backyard, John Ryder went on to participate in meetings large and small at the highest levels of Republican Party politics; and

WHEREAS, among his many other interests, Mr. Ryder was an avid reader, duck hunter, a season ticket holder to the Memphis Redbirds, and an appreciative judge in the Memphis in May Barbecue Contest; his love of opera began in high school when he served as a walk-on soldier in the Metropolitan Opera's local production of *Turandot*, and he was a longtime supporter and board member of Opera Memphis; and

WHEREAS, John Ryder was an active and devout member of his church, which he served faithfully for many years; and

WHEREAS, he was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, left to cherish his memory are his high school sweetheart and wife of almost forty-nine years, Melita Lain Whitaker, and their daughters, Reagan Lain Ryder and Nancy Kate

Ryder; son-in-law, Xavier Pedeux; and grandson, Fletcher Ryder Pedeux; John Ryder is also survived by his sisters, Peggy Ryder (Henry) Askew and Pat Ryder (Scott) Lovell; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ryder leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of John Louis Ryder, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character, his extraordinary contributions to the people of Tennessee, and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Ryder.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.